

# SIDNEY GREY:

A TALE OF SCHOOL LIFE.

By the Author of "Mia and Charlie."

"Innocence to talk of being sorry for a fault, and then to do nothing to cure one's self of it? I suppose it is. Well, I will try, then, my getting up in time will certainly prevent some confusion. But, Sidney, I must prevent Frank from being greedy, and Charlotte from quarrelling with Sarah. I don't know what to do about that; I am sure I talk her enough."

"There are two ways of talking to people, you know," said Sidney: "I know you have tried one."

"You mean that I have not said Charlotte a bad example by not obeying Sarah myself about those brown Holland chairs? I have noticed that you always attend to Sarah's tireless rules; and certainly the children pay some sort of attention to what you say. I wish I had taken the right side that night; I had no idea then that it would be all this quarrelling about it. It is very difficult to go back now. Oh, Sidney! people talk of conquering faults as if it were such an easy thing to do."

"I don't," said Sidney; "but don't you think that is worse still to talk as if it were impossible to do it, considering?"

"Considering what?"

"That we have not all to do ourselves," said Sidney, in a low voice: "that Jesus Christ died to save us from our sins. Don't you think it seems ungrateful, after that, to talk as if we could not possibly do it?"

"Yes," said Amy; "I don't think I should be so ready to give up if I believed that properly. Well, I am glad this letter has been written; it did not go to papa; by next month I will try to be a better person to write a more cheerful one."

While Amy and Sidney were having this grave talk, Charlotte was hearing the events of the day from Edward. "Well," she said, the instant she saw him, "bad or good?"

"Bad," said Edward.

"I might have known that by your face," said Charlotte. "So you were late again?"

"Sidney was. He never will let me wait for him, that's the worst of it. He says that I've no right to dawdle, and lose half my school lessons, because he can't walk as fast as other people. He has to come into the school-room all alone, and then, of course, every one turns round at once."

"I should wait for him," said Charlotte, "whether he liked it or not, for the principle of the thing."

"As if that would not be the very way to make him care more. I wish I had waited this morning, however."

"So Dr. Wise actually did it to Sidney? The tyrant! Edward, I use how it is. The hour has come; we must do or die. We must strike for our liberty, or be forever slaves."

"Slaves!" said Edward.

"Yes, slaves! Sarah and Dr. Wise are both as you see so plainly, despots; and if we submit to despotism we shall be slaves. I, for one, am ready to give my life for the cause of freedom. You know, in Rollin's 'Ancient History,' the Spartans used to say—I don't remember the exact words. It does not matter, the example is the thing; and I have resolved that it shall not be lost upon us. We will raise the standard of freedom, and this shall be our motto—'Liberty and Our Own Chances.' Let us think of Brutus, Edward, and strike."

"Whom?" said Edward.

"Whom? you are so matter-of-fact, Edward. I did not mean any one in particular. I meant that we were to strike for our freedom as people did in Ancient History." And Charlotte took a turn up and down the grass-plot, quoting poetry and waving her handkerchief.

"Wave the warp and wear the worst," the wedding-ring of Sarah's cousin, five amply.

"Winding sheet!" interrupted Edward, agitated. "But you don't expect me to kill?"

"Kill!" cried Charlotte, indignantly. "It is an odd thing, Edward, but you never do seem to understand one when one is speaking figuratively."

"But you said something about Brutus," said Edward.

"Of course I did," said Charlotte. "People always do when they talk of resisting tyrants. Of course, I said figuratively, that we were to imitate Brutus. You must know what that means."

"No, I don't," said Edward. "I don't know how to imitate Brutus figuratively. I believe you would tell me what you expect me to actually do, and whether I am to begin with Sarah or Dr. Wise."

"Actually to do! Oh! that's another thing," said Charlotte. "But why does one read Ancient History, I wonder, when the Lays of Ancient Rome, if it is not to teach one to fight against tyrants, of course, as I said before, in a figurative way?"

"The worst of it is," said Edward, "that I am not quite sure whether Dr. Wise is a tyrant or not. Sidney says I do, and I believe he is right, that it would be far worse for him if Dr. Wise made any great difference between him and the others. It would be noticed directly for Collins has taken a spite against us both because he knocked him down at the station. If he would fight it out at once I should not mind; but he won't. He pretends to knock down on me, because I'm in the lower school, so that I have never had a fair chance of making him hold his tongue; and then there's a great, stupid butcher's son, called Wycombe, who has taken it into his head that Sidney is a favorite, and he takes every opportunity he can get of saying jeering things, and playing malicious tricks. He shall not have more than that one comfort."

"Well, then, he is another tyrant to fight against," said Charlotte. "If I do instead of Dr. Wise."

"Better," said Edward, "for I can tell you that I shall fight him in a figurative way."

"Oh!" said Charlotte. "I am afraid you have been fighting lately a ready. That is the reason your jacket is torn, and that you have got that great lump on your head, that you are trying to fight with your eye. How does Sidney like your fighting about him? He looks dreadfully tired and out of sorts to-night."

"He does not like it at all. That's just the worst of it. He has such notions. I believe he has rather less than have me go into a passion. Would you believe it? Every day I see, while I and Lyon have been out of the way in the cricket field, Wycombe and his set of fellows have been playing Sidney, hunting him up into corners, and forcing him to eat pieces of raw meat and candle ends; and he never told me, though he knows that there is nothing that I should like better than to pay them out—nothing that I should like better."

"Sidney has odd notions about paying people out for things," said Charlotte. "Do you know, Edward, that sometimes his way of reading parts of the lessons at prayers, makes me feel almost sorry that I have played Sarah all day; and yet I have no doubt about her, as you have about Dr. Wise. She is a greater tyrant than Xerxes, or any of the Persian kings; and I think you and I should be quite justified in imitating Hannibal, and venturing war to smother the word 'till'."

"That's right!" interrupted Frank; "and you had better be quick, for we are all going to drink tea in the drawing-room with Aunt Ellice. Sarah is taking up some business toast, and Aunt Ellice says she is going to tell us a story after tea."

## CHAPTER VII.

AMY WALKER'S ROOM.

When Aunt Ellice was tolerably well, she generally sent for one or other of the children to spend an hour with her in the evening, which was her best time, and she would make the hour so pleasant that it was looked forward to by every one, from Amy to Frank, as the best time of the day. But this was the first time that they all had been invited to come together; and when Amy looked round the room, and saw what pains had been taken to give it its most inviting appearance, she began to think that their aunt had some special motive for the invitation.

"What a very nice room yours is, Aunt Ellice, and what extremely nice buttered toast you always seem to have for tea," said Frank.

"Well, you must put all the disagreeable medicine I have to take against the buttered toast, Frank, before you make up your mind to wish to change places with me."

"I don't think I should like to do that," said Frank; "but I must say, I do think that it would be rather nice to be ill. People always have such good things when they are ill, while every one else has to take against the buttered toast, and make a fuss with it."

"And they lose all the pleasure of waiting upon, and making a fuss with it, other people," said Aunt Ellice. "Medicine against buttered toast again, Sidney."

"For my part," said Charlotte, "I don't care for having nice things, or being made a fuss with. All that I care for, Aunt Ellice, is simply to have your own way."

"To have your own way," said Aunt Ellice, smiling. "Aunt Ellice! that was not at all what I was going to say."

"Not what you were going to say, but the truth, perhaps," said Aunt Ellice. "Do you know, all this talk about here in me, and Charlotte pities me very much for knowing so little of what is going on in the house; and I know that a good deal of the time, I am in each of your hearts. I believe I know, without your telling me, what you all most care for."

"What do I care for most, Aunt Ellice?" asked Amy.

"You care, but I hope not now, for being admired and praised. When you are doing anything, you are fond of imagining a little circle of admiring people round you, saying or thinking, 'How charming—how clever—how pretty—how good—how self-denying Amy!'"

"Oh, aunt! I am so very vain."

"Ask your own private fancy, Amy."

"What do I like best," said Frank.

"I am afraid you have told yourself this evening, Frank. You like pleasant things—as much of everything good, and as little of anything disagreeable, as you can manage to get for yourself. For Edward, he is wishing very much to know what I have found out about him; but he is too proud to ask, so I shall not tell him."

"Well, Aunt Ellice," said Charlotte, "I think mine is the shortest and most natural wish after all."

"Well, unfortunely, you are very unlikely ever to have it. How many people in the world do you suppose have their own way? Do you think I have? Why, cannot you please yourself about moving from my sofa. I am very far from having 'liberty and my own chance.'"

"There are always birds of the air who carry the matter over to sick people in shut-up rooms; but now, Charlotte, let us arrange all the tea-cups in the tray like Sarah likes them to be placed, and Edward shall put the tray on the table outside the door, and then we will have our story."

"There is one question I should like to ask you first, Aunt Ellice," said Charlotte. "Why do you care so much about pleasing Sarah?"

"I will have the story first, and then ask the question afterwards," said Aunt Ellice. "I am going to tell you a story about the time when your mamma and your Uncle Walter first came to live with us."

"Oh! I am so glad," said Charlotte, "that you are so much about pleasing Sarah?"

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## MISCELLANEOUS.